

Message Text

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DEPT PLEASE PASS DEA HQ WASHDC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI TH

SUBJECT: USE OF U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT IN SUPPORT OF NARCOTICS
PROGRAM IN THAILAND

REF: (A) STATE 047973 (B) BANGKOK 3842

SUMMARY: MISSION NEED FOR STAND-BY AUTHORITY TO USE U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT IN CONNECTION WITH NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING WAS UNDERLINED BY INCIDENT IN DEC 1975, DISCUSSED BELOW. SIMILAR PROBLEM CAME UP DURING VISIT TO THAILAND IN FEBRUARY BY MR. JERRY JENSON, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF DEA, WHOSE TRAVEL WITHIN THAILAND WAS HAMPERED BY NON-AVAILABILITY OF CIVIL AIR TRANSPORT. MISSION ESTIMATES NEED FOR USE OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT WOULD COME UP ONLY A FEW TIMES PER YEAR. WHEN NEEDED, THERE WILL BE NO RPT NO TIME AVAILABLE FOR LEISURELY WAIVER PROCEDURE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN REPLY TO PARA 2 OF REF A, EMBASSY NOTES SPECIFIC CASE THAT CAME UP IN DEC, 1975, IN CONNECTION WITH DEA THAI TRAWLER TASK FORCE OPERATION. DEA TASK FORCE HAS HAD TO DEPEND ON AIRCRAFT SUPPORT FROM THAI POLICE AVIATION DIVISION. TPAID AIRCRAFT (A NORNIER) WAS TAKEN OFF FLYING STATUS FOR 100 HOUR INSPECTION. AIRCRAFT WAS UNAVAILABLE FOR USE AFTERNOON OF DEC 15, 1975, AT TIME CRITICAL TO SUCCESS OF TRAWLER OPERATION. AIRCRAFT WAS NOT AVAILABLE
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AGAIN UNTIL DEC 17. NO RPT NO OTHER AIRCRAFT WAS AVAIL-

ABLE FOR DEA USE. AS DEA CANNOT CONTROL TIMING OF TRAWLER OPERATIONS (THEY INVOLVE SURVEILLANCE OF TRAWLERS SUSPECTED OF CARRYING NARCOTICS), IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE BE IN POSITION TO USE U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT ASSETS IN THAILAND, AT LEAST WHEN TPAID AIRCRAFT NOT RPT NOT AVAILABLE FOR SURVEILLANCE OF TRAWLERS.

2. AS OF MARCH 1, 1976, COL PRAKHIT REPLACED MG CHAKRA LAKSANABOONSONG AS MARINE POLICE COMMANDANT. COL PRAKHIT IS NOT RPT NOT LIKELY TO BE AS COOPERATIVE WITH DEA AS GEN. CHAKRA HAD BEEN, THUS PLACING EVEN GREATER RELIANCE ON AERIAL SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY THAN HERETOFORE. AVAILABILITY OF A RELIABLE AND SAFE AIR ASSET IS NOW CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF TRAWLER OPERATIONS. ONLY UNITS IN THAILAND CAPABLE OF MEETING THOSE REQUIREMENTS ARE U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT ATTACHED TO JUSMAG.

3. ANOTHER SPECIFIC CASE OF OUR NEED FOR STANDBY USE OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT INVOLVED VISIT TO THAILAND, FEB 11-15, OF MR. JERRY N. JENSON, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF DEA. MR. JENSON, AS PART OF HIS FAMILIARIZATION VISIT TO THAILAND, REQUIRED AIR TRANSPORT TO CHIANG MAI FROM BANGKOK. HE WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN RESERVATIONS ON COMMERCIAL AIR AS ALL AVAILABLE SPACE WAS FULLY BOOKED. AT THE LAST MINUTE, A THAI POLICE AIRCRAFT WAS MADE AVAILABLE FOR HIM TO MAKE THE TRIP. HOWEVER, FOR THE REASONS NOTED ABOVE, TPAID AIRCRAFT CANNOT BE COUNTED ON IN ALL CASES FOR ESSENTIAL TRAVEL OF THE KIND DESCRIBED IN THIS TEL.

4. DEA IS NOT RPT NOT REQUESTING "BLANKET AUTHORITY" TO USE U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT. WE ANTICIPATE A MAXIMUM OF FOUR TRAWLER OPERATIONS A YEAR, AND U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT WOULD BE REQUIRED ONLY DURING SUCH AN OPERATION.

5. THAILAND IS SIMPLY NOT RPT NOT A COUNTRY WITH AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF SCHEDULED, FEEDER, AND CHARTER AIRLINES. IT HAS A SINGLE, SCHEDULED CIVIL AIRLINE OPERATING WITHIN THE COUNTRY. TPAID HAS SOME AVIATION ASSETS, OF VARIABLE QUALITY, BUT THESE ARE OFTEN UNAVAILABLE IN CASE OF IMMEDIATE NEED. WHAT THE MISSION IS ASKING
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FOR IS AUTHORITY TO USE U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS A FEW TIMES A YEAR, IN CONNECTION WITH DEA TRAWLER OPERATIONS OR TRAVEL OF SENIOR DEA PERSONNEL, SUCH AS MR. JENSON. WHEN THE NEED FOR USE OF U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT BECOMES APPARENT, THERE WILL BE NO RPT NO TIME AVAILABLE FOR THE USUAL, WAIVER PROCEDURE.
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED DEA HQ WASHDC.

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